



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Kyrgyzstan's Handling Uzbek Asylum Seekers

As delivered by Ambassador Julie Finley
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
October 6, 2005

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States is committed to supporting human rights and the proper treatment of asylum seekers. We applaud sincerely the courage of the Kyrgyz government in protecting some 450 Uzbeks who sought refuge in Kyrgyzstan, despite pressure to repatriate them. The recent release of 11 Uzbek asylum seekers for resettlement by UNHCR is further evidence of Kyrgyzstan's commitment to human rights.

We urge Kyrgyzstan to continue to uphold its international obligations under the 1951 Geneva Convention and 1984 Convention Against Torture by releasing the remaining four Uzbek refugees to UNHCR.

The evacuation of the Uzbeks from Kyrgyzstan to Romania was indeed an unusual solution. This is not the appropriate method of handling refugees who have reached a country of first asylum. Going forward, Kyrgyzstan must live up to its responsibilities as a country of first asylum under the Geneva Convention and its 1967 Protocol.

We encourage Kyrgyzstan to work closely with the UNHCR to respond appropriately to any future asylum seekers.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.